

VZCZCXRO4717
PP RUEHFL RUEHLA RUEHMRE RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHMO #2895/01 2740837
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 300837Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0163
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNOSC/OSCE POST COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002895

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/29/2118

TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [OSCE](#) [RU](#) [GA](#)

SUBJECT: DEPUTY FONMIN GRUSHKO ON NATO, OSCE MANDATE IN
GEORGIA, AND NEW EUROPEAN SECURITY STRUCTURES

Classified By: Ambassador John Beyrle. Reason: 1.4 D

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Deputy Fonmin Aleksandr Grushko (whose portfolio includes NATO, OSCE, EU, COE) told the Ambassador that despite tensions, cooperation with NATO in Afghanistan remained strategically important to Russia. Grushko criticized U.S. support for Saakashvili and a MAP for Georgia. He shed no new light on OSCE/EU access in South Ossetia, but did not exclude the discussion of a phase two deployment of observers while making clear that 7,600 Russian troops would remain in Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia as a security guarantee. Finally, Grushko said Russia would move forward with Medvedev's European Security Proposal but provided no details on when and how. End Summary.

NATO and Afghanistan

¶2. (C) In a September 26 meeting with Deputy Fonmin Grushko, the Ambassador conveyed NATO's frustration with Ambassador Rogozin's unhelpful rhetoric, particularly criticism of NATO's performance in Afghanistan and threats to cancel the transit agreement. This contradicted the GOR's position that cooperation on Afghanistan was a strategic priority.

¶3. (C) Grushko replied that NATO's taking sides with Georgia damaged "mutual trust" and demonstrated that NATO did not see Russia as a "real partner." Furthermore, it appeared Georgia was to be rewarded for its "aggression" in South Ossetia with a MAP and the creation of the Georgia/NATO Commission. However, after making his point that although it was no longer "business as usual" with NATO, Grushko conceded that Afghanistan was an important security concern.

Georgia

¶4. (C) Grushko read off a litany of allegations to the effect that that NATO and the U.S. had given Shakashvili the "green light" to invade South Ossetia. As soon as Russia completed its withdrawal from Georgian bases in 2007, he concluded, the U.S. began to arm Georgia under "Train and Equip" and Saakashvili drew closer to NATO. Grushko suggested that U.S. military advisors were involved in the run-up to the August hostilities in Tskhinvali.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador pushed back strongly. Washington had advised Saakashvili not to respond militarily to Russia's provocations. The GTEP's mission in Georgia was associated with counterterrorism and Georgia's participation in the Iraq coalition. Grushko acknowledged that final judgment would

have to be reserved until the facts were fully examined.

OSCE/EU Monitors

¶16. (C) The Ambassador urged that the Russians demonstrate more flexibility on deploying OSCE and EU observers within the administrative boundaries of South Ossetia. When asked to justify Russia's basing 7,600 troops in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Grushko claimed that the presence of Russian troops was a security guarantee for the two republics and protection against possible Georgian aggression. As for reported incidents involving harassment of ethnic Georgians (including the murder of a Georgian policeman) in areas controlled by Russian forces, Grushko explained disingenuously that Russia could not assume full responsibility for what the authorities of "independent" South Ossetia do. He maintained that Russian troops were under order not to engage in anti-Georgian hostilities and to protect the local population. The Ambassador stressed that Russia bears full responsibility for the conduct of South Ossetian militias.

¶17. (C) Grushko said in accordance with the September 8 agreement, access to South Ossetia for the 8 MMOs on the ground before the start of hostilities would be permitted. Any further deployment of observers in South Ossetia would require a change in the existing mandate. He did not rule out a discussion of a "phase two" deployment of additional OSCE monitors. He said broader discussions on security issues would have to involve the South Ossetian and Abkhazian authorities as well as the Russians, and would have to include confidence building and economic assistance measures.

MOSCOW 00002895 002 OF 002

He remained skeptical about the ability of the OSCE and the EU to "share responsibility" for security with the Russians.

European Security Architecture

¶18. (C) Grushko expounded on President Medvedev's recent calls for a revised Euro-Atlantic security framework that would move away from blocs. In essence, the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and other Soviet dominated institutions created a security vacuum in Europe filled in large part by the expansion of NATO. Russia was prepared to cooperate with NATO and other transatlantic institutions. However, unchecked NATO enlargement had created dividing lines in Europe and given rise to "anti-Russian policies" in Ukraine and Georgia as well as the "unrealistic" perception in Washington that NATO's reach and appeal was global. He gave no details on how and when Russia would pursue this discussion with the Europeans or the U.S.

Comment

¶19. (C) While Grushko broke no new ground on OSCE/EU monitors in South Ossetia, he conceded that continued cooperation with NATO on Afghanistan remained strategically important for Russia, a theme we continue to hear repeated by most officials we raise the issue with. Grushko's lack of detail in describing Medvedev's blueprint for a new European security architecture was surprising, given his portfolio, but was also in keeping with the only slightly less vague concept described by FM Lavrov in his UNGA speech the next day. It would appear that the MFA does not have the lead in this initiative. End Comment.

BEYRLE